

UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARIAT

Distr.
GENERALST/SG/AC.4/SR.2
22 May 1963

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PREPARATION OF PLANS FOR
THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 28 January 1963, at 11 a.m.

CONTENTS

Plans for the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (General Assembly
resolution 1775 (XVII) (ST/SG/AC.4/L.1.5; ST/SG/AC.4/L.1-3)

PRESENT:Chairman:

Mrs. TREE (United States of America)

Rapporteur:

Mr. DEMETROPOULOS Greece

Members:

Mr. GARCIA DEL SOLAR Argentina

Mr. PARTON Canada

Mr. WIJEGONAWARDENA Ceylon

Mr. BAYONA Colombia

Mr. VOLIO JIMENEZ Costa Rica

Mr. JATIVA Ecuador

Mr. BOUQUIN France

Mr. NABAVI Iran

Mr. SCOLAMIERO Italy

Mr. SAWAI Japan

Mr. RIFA'I Jordan

Mr. LUOMAN Mauritania

Mr. BAROODY Saudi Arabia

Mr. ANUMAN-RAJADHON Thailand

Mr. OSTROVSKY Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Mr. ATTLEE United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Mr. MEANS United States of America

Mr. MARQUES SERE Uruguay

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mr. REYMOND International Labour Organisation

Mr. SALSAMENDI United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Dr. SACKS }
Mrs. KALM } World Health OrganizationRepresentatives of the United Nations Children's Fund:

Mr. GERIN

Mr. HUMPEREY Director, Division of Human Rights

Secretariat:

Mr. CULPEPPER Secretary of the Committee

/...

PLANS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (General Assembly resolution 1775 (XVII)) (ST/SG/AC.4/1-5); ST/SG/AC.4.4/L.1-3)

The CHAIRMAN welcomed the new members of the Committee. She suggested that the representatives who had had time to examine the new documentation that had been submitted should express their views and that the others should discuss it at a subsequent meeting. A sub-committee could then be set up to select, with the assistance of the Secretariat, the most practicable of the suggestions made and on the basis of that selection the Rapporteur could prepare a draft report for submission to the Committee as a whole. When the Committee had considered the draft report, the Rapporteur could prepare his final report to be submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its forthcoming session.

Mr. OSTROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he was glad that the membership of the Committee had been expanded; he was not entirely satisfied, however, for the socialist countries were still not adequately represented.

Everyone seemed to be in agreement that the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be as extensive as possible. When it came to the steps to be taken in connexion with that celebration, however, there appeared to be two divergent trends. One favoured a formalistic approach with emphasis on the adoption of resolutions, as though that were an end in itself, and failed to take into account the actual evolution of the problem of human rights throughout the world; that, indeed, was the spirit in which General Assembly resolution 1775 (XVII) had been introduced. The other trend stressed the achievement of results. He recalled in that connexion that the inclusion in resolution 1775 (XVII) of a seventh preambular paragraph to the effect that the application of suitable measures to mark the anniversary might further promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms had originated with an amendment proposed by the USSR to the joint draft resolution. The purpose underlying that paragraph had been to stress that the celebration should be aimed at improving the situation rather than merely calling attention to the successes already achieved.

/...

(Mr. Ostrovsky, USSR)

One point which should be given prominence during the celebration was the progress made towards the abolition of colonialism, for colonialism was the complete antithesis of the concept of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The inclusion in the preamble to resolution 1775 (XVII) of a paragraph expressing the hope that all States would implement General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), so that the anniversary would witness a decisive step forward in the liberation of peoples, had originally been proposed by the delegations of Guinea, Mali and Mauritania. His delegation agreed with them that in the celebration of the anniversary resolution 1514 (XV) should be kept in mind, for the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples was closely bound up with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On the occasion of the anniversary it should also be stressed that the situation regarding compliance with the recommendations made in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remained unsatisfactory in many parts of the world, as was noted in a preambular paragraph of resolution 1775 (XVII) which had been included at the instance of his delegation, and that in some cases it was deteriorating.

Mr. ATTLEE (United Kingdom) expressed his thanks to the delegations which had urged that the United Kingdom should be represented on the Committee. His country was proud to have been among the architects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and welcomed the opportunity to make a contribution to the Committee's work.

He noted with regret that the election of a member of the United States delegation as Chairman of the Committee had been opposed by a delegation which had long been rather reluctant to discuss the subject of human rights and which was now treating General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) as a substitute for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Although he had not yet read all the documentation pertaining to the Committee's work he would like to make a few general comments. Firstly, he thought that one of the best ways in which Governments could participate in the celebration would be to take steps to ensure real progress in the implementation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of their citizens. By such means as official

(Mr. Attlee, United Kingdom)

messages, directives to schools and, where broadcasting systems were government-controlled, appropriate programming, Governments could do much to mobilize public opinion on behalf of the observance of human rights; he pointed out in that connexion that in democratic countries positive action resulted from the pressure of public opinion. At the same time, it was the non-governmental organizations which could do most to encourage citizens to become aware of their rights and obligations.

The suggestions made by the Office of Public Information in its memorandum (ST/SG/AC.4/L.2) were excellent. With regard to the dissemination of printed matter, however, he wished to emphasize his delegation's view that quality was more important than quantity. In many parts of the world information media tended to be flooded with so much documentation that they could not possibly give adequate consideration to it all. He therefore hoped that the material disseminated would consist of reasonably large amounts of material of very high quality rather than enormous quantities of less valuable documentation.

Mr. VOLIO JIMENEZ (Costa Rica) expressed his satisfaction that Costa Rica had been invited to participate in the Committee's work and observed that in view of its special character the Committee should not allow itself to be influenced by political considerations which had nothing to do with the task entrusted to it.

Two of the most important documents which the Committee had before it were the summary of available suggestions concerning the celebrations (ST/SG/AC.4/L.3) and the statement received from the Permanent Representative of Ceylon (ST/SG/AC.4/5). In carrying out the suggestions made in those documents emphasis should be placed on participation by those elements of the population which, owing to economic conditions and in some cases to political factors, stood to gain most from the implementation of the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Otherwise the celebration would be nothing more than a restatement of those principles.

Mr. RIFA'I (Jordan) said that on the whole the suggestions set forth in document ST/SG/AC.4/L.3 appeared to him to call for a ceremonial approach to the celebration of the anniversary rather than one which would produce concrete results. The impact of the celebration would be far greater if it was used as the occasion

(Mr. Rifa'i, Jordan)

for positive action, such as the proclamation of a general amnesty covering political and perhaps other prisoners, or the adoption of measures to extend women's rights. Such action would help to convince the younger generation that the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights had genuine significance.

He would make more detailed comments after he had familiarized himself with the remainder of the documentation.

Mr. MEANS (United States of America) pointed out that the words "... will witness a decisive step forward in the liberation of all peoples", in the third preambular paragraph of General Assembly resolution 1775 (XVII), had been proposed by the delegations of Colombia, Costa Rica and Thailand.

His delegation wished to suggest that the activities mentioned in paragraph 1 (j) of the annex to document ST/SG/AC.4/L.3 should include the use of world-wide communications media to carry pre-recorded conversation-messages between past Presidents of the General Assembly, the first Secretary-General and the incumbent Secretary-General. All Member States would be asked to encourage the owners, in cases of private ownership, and the managers, in cases of State ownership, of radio and television media to broadcast at least part of the conversations. In that connexion, the United States Government would consider approaching the owners of Telstar. His delegation also thought that the General Assembly should be asked to place a plaque or bronze tablet inscribed with the Universal Declaration in a conspicuous place at United Nations Headquarters, where it could be seen by visitors. The plaque could be dedicated on the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration.

Literature stressing the purposes, work and accomplishments of the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities should be prepared and widely disseminated. National committees for the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary should be set up to form the nuclei of permanent organizations to work out ways and means of implementing the Universal Declaration. National and local festivals should be planned and human rights concerts should be held nationally and locally, with the appropriate publications. The United Nations had often given a concert on Human Rights Day and various cities had followed that example. Since the inclusion in

(Mr. Means, United States)

the programmes of material on the Universal Declaration increased printing costs, one practical way to help communities to hold such concerts might be to provide mass-produced programme blanks already printed with material on the Declaration, including appropriate quotations. In addition, local and national art exhibitions might be held, with prizes for the best artistic work on the subject of human rights.

Mr. OSTROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that what he had wanted to emphasize was that, in the context of human rights and the Universal Declaration, attention should be concentrated on practical results and on the idea of progress towards the liberation of all peoples. It was essential that the provisions of the Universal Declaration and of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples should be implemented and that all forms of discrimination should be abolished. The work of the Special Committee certainly had political significance; such phenomena as apartheid, fascism and colonialism must disappear because they were contrary to human rights. His delegation expected Governments to adopt firm measures in that connexion.

Mr. LUQMAN (Mauritania) said that the invitation extended to his country to participate in the work of the Special Committee was a testimony to his Government's dedication to human rights. The people of Mauritania, who were a Moslem people, would always be guided by the teachings of the Koran, which had enumerated every possible human right before any other codification had existed. It was regrettable that two States Members of the United Nations, Portugal and South Africa, were still denying basic human rights to their inhabitants.

Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) said that the Secretariat suggestions (ST/SG/AC.4/L.3) were useful and comprehensive and would serve as a guide to the Special Committee. The material to be used for the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration should include a description of the genesis and evolution of human rights. The United Nations had not invented human rights, which had already been embodied in literature such as the Koran and the Bible, but had codified them for adaptation to contemporary circumstances. In that task, the United Nations had benefited from the progress achieved as a result of certain revolutions, such as the French and the Russian revolutions. Human rights originated

(Mr. Baroody, Saudi Arabia)

from the time when men had begun to feel that they had certain rights and should not be subjected to discrimination. It should be remembered that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been a collective effort and credit could not be given to any one person or country.

The United Kingdom representative had rightly said that quality was more important than quantity with regard to documentation. Use should be made of all types of visual material, including pamphlets, which should be distributed where they were likely to have some effect. In the developed countries and in some urban areas of the developing countries the printed word could be effective, but on the whole interesting films would have a greater impact on the public, especially in countries where illiteracy persisted. Films could be shown illustrating the most important articles of the Universal Declaration. Television, too, should be used whenever possible. Human rights postage stamps would provide good national and international publicity and it might be possible to arrange with the Universal Postal Union to levy an extra tax on the purchase of stamps, which Governments would donate to the United Nations to finance certain projects related to human rights.

It should be remembered that the Universal Declaration had been the precursor of the human rights covenants, which it was hoped would be generally implemented in the near future. Such implementation should be achieved through education rather than enforcement, since experience had shown that it was impossible to force Governments to implement human rights. The end of colonialism was universally desired and the draft Covenant on civil and political rights mentioned the right of self-determination. Although colonialism was a fundamental issue, it was only one aspect of the Universal Declaration and of the draft Covenant. Many countries had been liberated from the colonial yoke, and Arab and African membership of the United Nations had recently increased considerably. Other fundamental human rights were still not being observed; racial and religious discrimination, arbitrary arrest and many other such violations of human rights persisted. There were many obstacles and difficulties preventing the universal observance of human rights, and the celebrations connected with the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration could help to make more people conscious of their duties in that respect, since freedom was illusory if it did not entail responsibilities.

/...

Mr. ANUMAN-RAJADHON (Thailand) observed that as the Special Committee's terms of reference required it only to prepare plans for the celebration, it should address itself to its task and not engage in the kind of political debate on the substance of human rights which was normally the province of the General Assembly's Third Committee.

No country was in a position to assert that all its people enjoyed all the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration and it ill behoved countries to try to interfere in the human rights problems of others while not permitting their own people to enjoy important human rights. The members of the Special Committee should think in terms of promoting all the rights proclaimed by the Universal Declaration, even if some of them were not fully enjoyed in their own countries.

Mr. BAYONA (Colombia) said that his delegation would probably have some suggestions to make after it had studied the documents recently circulated. He would like, however, to ask one question: namely, whether the Committee intended to engage in a debate on where and how human rights were being implemented. He would be more than happy to contribute to such a debate but he wondered whether the Special Committee was the place for it. It seemed to him that it was the task of the Special Committee to plan a world campaign for liberty and to promote not one but all of the human rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration.

Mr. BARTON (Canada) expressed satisfaction at the expansion of the Special Committee and welcomed the new members.

In the field of human rights, the role of the United Nations was that of a catalyst and the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration represented a good opportunity to make the Declaration better known and to promote its implementation. Governments would take steps to implement human rights when their peoples demanded them and the celebration should therefore be aimed at encouraging activity at the local level by non-governmental organizations and other agencies interested in human rights.

In line with the remarks of the representatives of Saudi Arabia and Thailand, he suggested that the general approach should be to promote the feeling that the place to begin was at home, and to encourage people in each country to think about their own shortcomings in the matter of human rights and to face their

(Mr. Barton, Canada)

responsibilities. Most of the suggestions summarized in the Secretariat paper (ST/SG/AC.4/L.3) were good in that they dealt with activities at the local level. In his view, grandiose and costly commemorative activities would detract from, rather than add to, a fitting celebration of the anniversary.

Mr. BOUQUIN (France) said that he was grateful to the Secretary-General for having taken into account all the suggestions made at the last meeting regarding the membership of the Special Committee. He agreed with the representatives of Thailand and Colombia that the Special Committee was not competent to discuss the substance or meaning of human rights. It was in order, however, for members to express views on the principles that should guide the planning of the celebration.

In his opinion, the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration should aim at leaving a more vivid impression than that of the tenth anniversary. Although he probably differed with his Soviet colleague with regard to the countries concerned, he had to agree that after fifteen years the situation with respect to human rights in some countries was rather poor.

Secondly, the celebration should not concentrate on phenomena which were disappearing, while more or less disregarding those which stubbornly persisted. The celebration should serve to throw light on the dark areas and emphasize that the Declaration was a Universal Declaration and that all the rights it proclaimed were applicable everywhere.

Thirdly, the Special Committee could not do the work of other United Nations organs, such as those dealing with the draft Covenants on Human Rights, but it could help them by drawing attention to what those rights were, through wider dissemination of the text of the Universal Declaration, and to the results that had been achieved in strengthening those rights through the implementation of conventions such as, for example, that of UNESCO regarding the protection of human rights in the field of education, as suggested by the delegation of Ceylon (ST/SG/AC.4/5).

There was an enormous choice of possible activities at the international, national and local levels. He favoured a dynamic approach, activities that would engage large numbers of people, in schools, non-governmental organizations and so forth.

/...

(Mr. Bouquin, France)

He recalled that at the thirty-fourth session of the Economic and Social Council he had mentioned the possibility of utilizing artificial communications satellites to broadcast commentaries on the text of the Universal Declaration. He had been happy to hear the United States delegation make a similar suggestion in connexion with its recommendation that pre-recorded conversations and messages between past and present Secretaries-General and Presidents of the General Assembly should be transmitted by world-wide communications media. He suggested that such messages might also be broadcast by those who had played an active part in the drafting of the Universal Declaration, including, so far as his own country was concerned, Mr. René Cassin and Mr. Henri Laugier.

He welcomed the suggestions that had been made for establishing art and literature prizes for works dealing with human rights.

Finally, he supported the suggestion of the Chairman concerning the establishment of a sub-committee to prepare a draft plan for the Special Committee's consideration.

Mr. OSTROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) regretted that the under-representation of the socialist countries in the Special Committee compelled him to speak so often during the discussion.

He wished to point out, for the benefit of the Secretariat in its preparation of plans that it was generally agreed that the celebration should take into account the practical situation existing in the world and should not be limited to the formal commemoration of an anniversary.

He noted that the representative of Saudi Arabia did not object to decolonization being stressed together with the other human rights and that the representative of France agreed that there were still serious shortcomings with respect to the observance of human rights. The remarks of the representative of Thailand had reminded him of the fact that outside interference in the internal affairs of small countries often tended to restrict the enjoyment of human rights in those countries.

Mr. DEMETROPOULOS (Greece) observed that all the suggestions that had been received had merit and deserved to be passed on to the Commission on Human Rights. They covered a broad range of activities and the Special Committee should try to provide the Commission with some guidance by trying to define the purposes of the celebration.

/...

(Mr. Demetropoulos, Greece)

In the first place, the celebration could neither aspire to solve all the problems of human rights nor gloss over what remained to be done. Secondly, it was a "celebration" and should therefore have a ceremonial and optimistic character, stressing achievements. Finally, the celebration should promote the cause of human rights.

He agreed with the United Kingdom representative that that could best be done by acquainting the public at large with what those rights were and what the United Nations had done in that field, so that the people would be encouraged to claim them. The words of the Universal Declaration might, however, be regarded as somewhat platonic if presented without further explanation. Indeed, the whole celebration would have a hollow sound if the public was not made aware of certain facts concerning the Universal Declaration. What was needed was an authoritative United Nations text explaining the origin of the Universal Declaration and the steps that had been taken and were being taken to give effect to some or all of its provisions. Unfortunately no such text had ever been produced, although it had been called for in connexion with the celebration of the tenth anniversary. It seemed to him that such a text was indispensable, that it should be disseminated as widely as the Universal Declaration itself and that it could serve as basic material for lectures, speeches and other activities at the national level connected with the celebration. The text could be prepared by the Secretariat, or an international competition could be held for the preparation of a text. The second alternative would have the advantage of producing a great deal of material from which a choice could be made and of stimulating wide international interest in the Universal Declaration.

Competitions could also be held for stamp designs, posters and other visual material.

If such competitions were organized promptly, results could be obtained by the end of the year, when the celebration would be held. Substantial prizes should of course be awarded and with that in view countries and non-governmental organizations might be asked to contribute to a prize fund some of the resources they intended to spend on the celebration.

/...

The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee would meet that afternoon and would meet again on 30 January to appoint a sub-committee. After that, it would meet on 18 February, and if necessary 21 February, to consider the report of the sub-committee and to prepare its report to the Commission on Human Rights.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.